

# SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER – WHAT IT MEANS FOR TEACHERS AND LEADERS **BRIEFING**

This briefing provides a summary assessment of the main proposals set out in the Government's Schools White Paper as well as NASUWT's initial concerns. A separate briefing addresses the [SEND consultation](#) document published alongside the White Paper.

## **Schools White Paper at a glance**

### **• Long-term structural direction of the school system**

The White Paper sets out a long-term ambition for every school to become part of a multi-academy trust (MAT). While no fixed deadline or immediate compulsion is proposed, the direction of travel signals significant structural change over time. The Government presents this as a model based on collaboration and shared practice, with trusts expected to play a stronger role in school improvement and accountability. The Government identifies MATs as vehicles for innovation and shared practice, although questions remain about how these ambitions would translate into day-to-day improvements for teachers and pupils.

### **• Curriculum, attainment and accountability**

The proposals emphasise raising standards and narrowing disadvantage gaps over the long term. Consultation on future accountability arrangements will take place, including potential changes to Progress 8 and wider performance measures. The Government has indicated that enrichment, curriculum breadth and improved outcomes across subjects will form part of the wider reform narrative but detailed operational plans remain limited.

### **• Funding and investment priorities**

Announcements referenced in pre-publication material focus largely on capital investment, training and specialist provision rather than direct increases in core school budgets. Wider ambitions include investment in early years and targeted programmes and continued development of national standards and new frameworks for school improvement. While these announcements indicate areas of policy focus, the scale of new investment referenced to date does not match the wider structural challenges facing schools, particularly in relation to staffing capacity and workload.

### **• Workforce issues**

The White Paper signals possible changes to maternity provision, including an increase to eight weeks' full pay, but detailed arrangements and funding mechanisms have not yet been confirmed. Limited changes to maternity provision in isolation from wider reforms on workload, pay and working conditions raise questions about the extent to which this will make a meaningful difference to the ongoing teacher recruitment and retention crisis. There is relatively limited detail on wider workforce policy beyond professional development and leadership initiatives.

- **Executive pay and accountability**

The Government has indicated that measures may be introduced to address excessive executive pay in academy trusts. However, it appears that these provisions will be modest in scope and lack clear enforcement mechanisms. This raises questions about whether stronger oversight and transparency will be achieved in practice.

- **Behaviour, attendance and partnership working**

Further policy development is expected in relation to attendance and behaviour, with an emphasis on collaboration between schools, local authorities and wider services. The overall framing of the White Paper positions schools as hubs within broader local systems, with reforms phased over several years.

### **NASUWT's initial assessment**

NASUWT supports reform that improves outcomes for children and young people, but members will rightly be concerned about the extent to which the proposals impact on teachers' professional autonomy, workload and working conditions.

Teachers continue to manage the consequences of wider pressures on public services and increasing levels of pupil indiscipline. The Union expects any reform programme to recognise these realities rather than assuming that schools can absorb further responsibilities without additional support.

- **Direction of travel towards MAT structures**

The expectation that all schools will eventually join MATs raises important questions about governance, democratic accountability and national bargaining arrangements. NASUWT has consistently supported collaboration between schools but has expressed concern where structural reform risks weakening national pay and conditions frameworks or reducing local accountability. Continued academisation will not address the real challenges facing the profession, including workload pressures, recruitment difficulties and inequality between schools.

- **Accountability reform must reduce pressure and not add to it**

Consultation on new performance measures could represent an opportunity to address long-standing concerns about high-stakes accountability. However, any new framework must avoid increasing data collection requirements or introducing additional performance metrics that simply repackage existing pressures. Teachers will expect genuine change that supports a broad curriculum and professional judgement rather than intensifying scrutiny.

Proposals on performance measures are being introduced alongside a new Ofsted inspection regime that retains a high-stakes and potentially punitive approach to school accountability. Changes to metrics alone cannot compensate for the pressures created by inspection arrangements. There is a significant risk that the combined effect of revised inspections and new accountability expectations will increase rather than reduce workload and stress for teachers and school leaders.

- **Funding announcements focused on infrastructure rather than people**

While investment in buildings, training and specialist programmes is referenced in the White Paper, there is little detail on sustained revenue funding for schools or on measures to reduce excessive workload. Members will note that capital investment alone does not address staffing shortages, class sizes or the day-to-day pressures faced in classrooms. Without investment in workforce capacity,

ambitious reform programmes risk placing additional expectations on teachers without the resources needed to deliver them. This raises concerns that expectations of reform may move ahead of the practical capacity available within schools.

- **Action to tackle the recruitment, retention and wellbeing crisis in teaching falls short**

Other than limited proposals on maternity pay, the White Paper fails to set out the wider workforce strategy needed to address recruitment and retention challenges. The White Paper contains little evidence of a comprehensive plan to reduce workload, improve teacher wellbeing or tackle the systemic causes of staff leaving the profession. Professional development initiatives are being prioritised without parallel action on pay, conditions or time to plan and teach effectively.

- **Executive pay and system accountability**

References to limiting excessive academy trust CEO pay appear limited in scope. Without stronger transparency requirements and clear sanctions, concerns about disproportionate executive remuneration compared with pressures on school budgets are unlikely to be resolved. Teachers will expect reforms to strengthen public accountability and ensure that funding is directed towards pupils and frontline staff.

- **Increased expectations without sufficient support**

Across several policy areas, the White Paper emphasises ambition, collaboration and higher standards, but with limited clarity on how additional demands on staff time will be mitigated. Reform must be matched by realistic expectations of teachers' workload. Enrichment, partnership working and new accountability processes should not translate into additional unpaid duties or administrative burdens.

### **Next steps**

NASUWT will continue to scrutinise the White Paper carefully and provide further information, advice and guidance to members. The Union will continue to insist that priorities for reform must include:

- protecting national pay and conditions and maintaining strong democratic accountability across the school system;
- ensuring that accountability reform genuinely reduces pressure on teachers rather than increasing data demands;
- prioritising sustained investment in staffing and professional conditions, alongside any capital or structural change; and
- addressing the recruitment and retention crisis through a credible workforce strategy.

Teachers want reforms that improve education while recognising the realities of classroom practice. Structural change alone will not resolve the challenges facing schools. Lasting improvement depends on policies that are properly funded, developed with the profession and focused on supporting teachers as skilled professionals at the heart of the education system.